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Work that's worth the commute

Innovative programs gain recognition by Bay Area coalition

by *Jeb Bing*

A Bay Area coalition has recognized 139 employers, including 29 in Pleasanton, as the "Best Workplaces for Commuters."

Also on the third annual list compiled by the Bay Area's Best Workplaces for Commuters Coalition is the city of Pleasanton municipal workforce and Hacienda Business Park.

The program, sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency and Bay Area transportation groups, spotlights employers that are committed to reducing traffic and air pollution and improving the quality of life for commuters, according to James Paxson, general manager of the Hacienda Owners Association in Pleasanton.

"Hacienda, as a business park, offers free transit passes for all employees and residents and special incentives with five different transit agencies for first-time users," Paxson said. "Over 250,000 commute trips each year are diverted from single-occupancy vehicle-use through the business park's program."

He added that more than 17 percent of Hacienda's population use transit options for at least 30 percent of their work-day commutes, with 14 percent of the business park's employees now traveling to work in carpools or vanpools.

Robin Snyder, program manager for EPA's Best Workplaces for Commuters, said that traffic congestion cost the Bay Area \$2.8 billion in 2002.

"A commute time of 45 minutes or less is the top priority for homebuyers," Snyder said.

According to Snyder: ¥ More than 3.3 million people commute each day in the Bay Area, and nearly 70 percent of them drive to work alone. ¥ The average annual Bay Area traffic delay per capita for 2002 was 73 hours compared to 46 hours nationally. ¥ In total, congestion cost the Bay Area \$2.8 billion - \$675 per person - in 2002. ¥ The San Francisco-Oakland area is ranked the fourth most congested urban area in the country. ¥ More than 11 percent of Bay Area workers commute two hours a day - one hour in each direction. ¥ Bay Area residents perceive transportation as the second most pressing problem in the region, behind economic issues.

Nationally, statistics compiled by his organization show that the average annual delay per peak-road traveler in 85 urban areas was 46 hours per year in 2002, at a cost of \$63.2 billion in wasted time and fuel. Nearly 50 percent of workers describe their commutes as unsatisfying or stressful, and 36 percent say they would be willing to take a 10 percent pay cut for a shorter commute. Further, employees with commuter benefits are eight



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times more likely to use transit than those who don't have them.

The Bay Area coalition also reported that the average American household is spending 19.1 cents of every dollar on transportation, and that Americans who commute by car or truck spent about \$1,280 per year in 1999, compared to those who were able to use public transportation to get to and from work, who spent just \$765 per year.

Lisa Adamos of Pleasanton's Economic Development department said the city provides its employees with "excellent commuter benefits, including a Guaranteed/Emergency Ride Home program, transit subsidies and a parking cash-out program."

Besides the city of Pleasanton and Hacienda Business Park, Pleasanton business that made the "Bay Area's Best Workplaces for Commuters" list are Anixter Corp., California Indemnity Insurance Co., California Legacy Mortgage, CarrAmerica, Four Points by Sheraton, Hacienda Child Development Center, Huntington Learning Center, Intero Real Estate Services and John W. Noonan Professional Corp.

Also on the list are Kaiser Permanente Mental Health & CD Services, Mercedes-Benz of Pleasanton, PeopleSoft Inc., ProBusiness Services of California, Shaklee Corp., Sierra Suites Hotel/Summerfield Suites Hotel by Wyndham, Standard Pacific Homes of Northern California, Sweet Tomatoes, Tanner Insurance Brokers, TechRP, TJKM Transportation Consultants, Tyco Healthcare, United Global Investment Inc., Visual Eyes Optometry, Xign Corp. and Zenith Insurance Co.

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